United Nations ST/IC/2002/47

Secretariat

25 July 2002

Information circular*

To: Members of the staff at Headquarters

From: The Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management

Subject: **Language and Communications Programme at Headquarters — 2002/2003**

1. Language courses in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish are organized in order to promote linguistic balance and multilingualism within the Secretariat and to improve the language capabilities of its staff, as mandated by the General Assembly in its resolutions 2480 B (XXIII) of 21 December 1968, 43/224 D of 21 December 1988 and 50/11 of 2 November 1995. The purpose of these courses is to provide staff members with the opportunity to learn the official languages of the Organization and to use them in their work. To further enhance the ability of staff members to perform their jobs with greater competence and to develop their linguistic skills for professional development, special advanced courses in active listening and pronunciation, as well as courses in communication skills such as drafting and giving presentations, are offered.

2. The purpose of the present circular is to advise staff members of the registration dates and schedules for the United Nations Language and Communications Programme at Headquarters.

I. Fall 2002 and 2003 course calendar

3. The fall 2002 and 2003 course calendar is as follows:

(a) *September 2002 term*

Language classes:	16 September-6 December
End-of-term examinations:	9 December-13 December

(b) *January 2003 term*

Language classes:	6 January-28 March
End-of-term examinations:	31 March-4 April

* Expiration date of the present information circular: 31 December 2003.

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(c) *April 2003 term*

Language classes:	21 April-11 July
End-of-term examinations:	14 July-18 July

(d) *September 2003 term*

Language classes:	16 September-6 December
End-of-term examinations:	9 December-13 December

II. Registration

4. The registration schedule for language and communications courses is as follows:

(a) *Registration for September 2002 term*

30 August-6 September 2002

(b) *Registration for January 2003 term*

4 November-15 November 2002

(c) *Registration for April 2003 term*

24 February-7 March 2003

(d) *Registration for September 2003 term*

9 June-20 June 2003
2 September-5 September 2003

(e) *Registration for the January 2004 term*

3 November-14 November 2003

Registration procedure

5. New participants may register for a language course either using the e-registration form available online during the registration period or in room S-606 between 1 and 3 p.m. during the same period. Those who have some prior knowledge of the language they wish to study must make an appointment for a placement test when they register.

6. Once registered, participants will be given an opportunity in class, before the end-of-term examination, to renew their registration for regular courses in subsequent terms. Participants are advised that if they fail to register at that time they will be dropped from the programme unless they have submitted a written explanation of their special circumstances to the appropriate language coordinator.

7. All participants, whether new or continuing, who wish to participate in special courses, such as the advanced reading workshops and the pronunciation workshops, must register either using the e-registration form or in room S-606, as described in paragraph 5 above. In the case of conversation and special courses, if a course is oversubscribed, priority will be given to staff members and applicants who have not taken the course before.

8. Returning participants who have been absent from a course of study for two terms or more will be required to take a placement test in order to re-enrol in the programme.

Language of study

9. Prospective participants are advised to exercise particular care in choosing the language in which they wish to take either a regular or an accelerated course, for they may register for only one such course each term and may not interrupt a course of study in one language in order to begin studying another without the authorization of the Learning Service. Students in the programme must write to the staff development officer in charge of the Language and Communications Programme to request such a change.

Notification of enrolment

10. Staff members and other participants whose registration is current or who have registered during the established registration period should check the class lists, which will be posted on the sixth floor of the Secretariat building, in the SA-B classroom area, and on the second floor of the DC2 building during the week before the beginning of each term.

Cancellation of registration

11. Participants who believe that they will be unable to complete the course in which they are enrolled and wish to withdraw must do so by completing the change-of-registration form in room S-606 between 1 and 3 p.m. within the first two weeks of the term. If those students wish to re-register for the same course in a subsequent term, they must come in person to room S-606 during the announced registration period. Paying participants who cancel their registration after this two-week period will be considered participants for the term and will be charged the full fee for each course in which they have registered (i.e., no tuition fees are refunded after the second week of classes). Furthermore, they will be treated as repeaters when they register for the same course in a subsequent term.

12. The fee for each regular and accelerated course is **$350** per term. Two-hour per week conversation and special courses are **$200** per term, and one-hour per week special courses are **$100** per term.

III. Language courses

13. Four types of language courses a.e offered each term: regular, accelerated, conversation and specialized courses. In addition, the Learning Service designs and conducts special job-related language courses to meet specific language needs at the request of departments.

Regular courses

14. Regular courses meet for one-hour periods, three or four times a week, depending on the level. Classes are offered at the following times:

Before work:	8.30 a.m.
Lunch hour:	12 noon, 1 p.m. and 2 p.m.
After work:	5.45 p.m. (6.15 p.m. during the General Assembly session)

15. Not all levels of a given language are offered at each of these times. Draft schedules, posted in room S-606, should be consulted at the time of registration. Every effort will be made to place registrants according to the time preferences they indicate; however, because the number of places in lunch-hour courses is limited, there is no guarantee that registrants will be given the time they have chosen.

Accelerated courses

16. Accelerated courses are offered as an intensive alternative to the regular programme. Classes meet five days a week from 8.30 to 9.30 a.m.

IV. Special communication skills

17. To address the needs of the Organization for staff members to develop their communication skills for work-related purposes, courses have been developed as indicated in the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the strategy for the management of the Organization's human resources (A/C.5/51/1).

18. The writing training component of communication skills addresses the need of staff members whose functions require them to draft in a working language of the Organization to improve their drafting skills. Writing workshops, which include courses in expository writing, drafting letters and memoranda (English and French) and report writing, generally meet from 3 to 5 p.m., one day a week. In addition, presentation skills courses (English and French) are offered for staff members to develop their ability to speak more effectively before groups. Specialized language workshops in a variety of language skill areas are offered; advanced reading, listening and pronunciation skills workshops are available. These workshops allow participants to focus on and improve their abilities in specific skill areas. At the time of registration, participants may ascertain which workshops are available in the language they wish to study.

19. For a description of these courses, staff are requested to consult the Language Training and Communication Skills page of the Staff Development Services/Office of Human Resources Management site on the United Nations Intranet (http://intranet/OHRM/Training/2La0.htm), or the Staff Development Programme booklet, copies of which are available in room S-606.

V. Additional information

Self-study and resource centre

20. The Learning Service operates a self-study and resource centre (DC2, room 203), containing a multimedia laboratory for individual study. The self-study centre

offers audio and video materials, computer software and CD-ROMs, as well as language training manuals, which are geared to the further development of acquired linguistic skills for United Nations-related purposes. Some communication skills self-study materials are also available.

21. The hours during which the self-study and resource centre are open are posted on the bulletin boards on the second floor of the DC2 building and the sixth floor of the Secretariat building at the beginning of each term so that staff can avail themselves of this resource. All students in the first three levels of a language programme should work on developing their skills in the centre at least one half hour per week in addition to their class work.

Lunch-hour attendance of language courses

22. Supervisors are requested to permit staff members attending classes during their lunch hour 20 minutes for a quick meal before resuming their work.

Absenteeism

23. Participants are advised that those who fail to attend class during the first week of the term will automatically be dropped from the class list, and their places may be allotted to persons on the waiting list unless they have informed the language coordinator in writing that they will be absent. Absences from class during the term should be explained in writing to the appropriate language coordinator.

Course materials

24. On the first day of class participants will be informed of the materials that will be used during the course. Textbooks assigned for specific language courses may be available for purchase in the United Nations bookshop, located in GA-032A.

End-of-term examinations

25. Examination schedules are posted during the last month of classes. Participants are advised that examinations are an integral and mandatory part of the language programme. Participants who do not sit for the end-of-term examination will be dropped from the programme unless they have submitted adequate written explanation to the appropriate coordinator in advance of their absence.

26. Examinations are given after the last week of classes for regular and accelerated courses to determine whether a participant will pass to a higher level or repeat the course. The examinations consist of written and oral components, both of which participants must pass to be able to go on to the next level. Participants who fail a course may arrange to have a general discussion of the results of their examination by making an appointment with the appropriate language coordinator one week after the beginning of a term.

27. Participants who are prevented by compelling circumstances from taking the examination as scheduled and who wish to request a make-up examination must write a memorandum to the coordinator of the language they are studying.

28. Participants who choose to repeat a level irrespective of their grade on the final examination should so inform their teacher at the end of the course period in order to be re-enrolled at the same level. A repeater's fee will be charged.

Language proficiency examination

29. The United Nations language proficiency examination is the official test of a staff member's knowledge of a language and may be taken both by participants who have completed the last level of a language course and by staff members who have achieved proficiency from outside sources. The language proficiency examination will be given on 28 and 29 January 2003 and 20 and 21 May 2003. The application to take this examination must be made separately. Further details are provided in the information circular on the year 2003 language proficiency examinations. There are no make-up examinations for the language proficiency examination.

VI. Enquiries

30. The information desk located in room S-606 in the Secretariat building is open from 1 to 3 p.m. on weekdays for enquiries.

31. Telephone numbers to call for information:

Officer-in-Charge of the Language and Communications Programme:	963-7027
Information desk:	963-7056
Self-study and resource centre:	963-2482
Language proficiency examinations:	963-9503/9508

Pedagogical enquiries and appointments with language coordinators and head teachers:

Arabic:	963-9506
Chinese:	963-2481
English:	963-2985
French:	963-7019 and 963-1125
Russian:	963-7063
Spanish:	963-7026

Teachers' room (1B-24):	963-5155
Teachers' room (DC2-201):	963-2480
Fax machine number for the Language and Communications Programme office, room S-606:	963-6016

Office hours of language coordinators are posted outside room S-606.